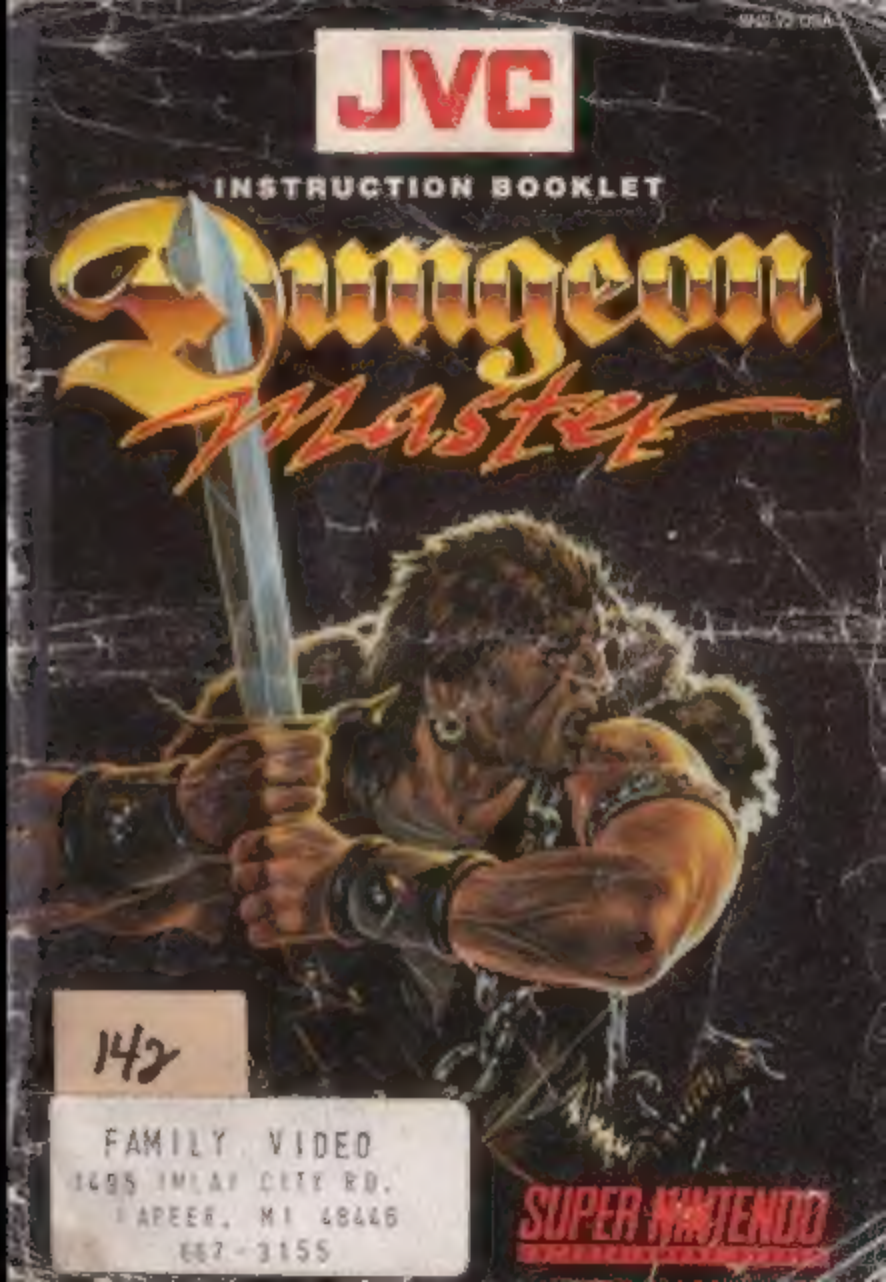
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Dungeon Master™

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It was quiet in the dungeon of the Grey Lord. The soft flames of the torches gleamed on the Firestaff, grandly displayed in its case of glass on a field of cobalt blue. The rubies and sapphires encircling the hilt caught the light and threw it against the brass astrolabe and compass that Theron of Viborg held in his hands as he copied a star chart for his master.

Deep within the bowels of the dungeon, the Grey Lord's great bronze bell tolled the hour. Listening, Theron looked up from his task and sighed. Five o'clock. Would the wizard never emerge from his laboratory?

Fulcrum, his master's raven, flapped his wings and landed on Theron's shoulder.

"Ah, ha, I have it! Ah, ha, I have it!" the raven cawed, in perfect imitation of the pleased tone the Grey Lord adopted whenever he solved a problem or completed an experiment. "I have it, ah, ha! Ah, ha!"

"My heart is filled with joy for you," Theron muttered. "Now, do you think you could fly through that thick oak door and remind our master that I'm expected in Viborg?"

"Ah, ha!" Fulcrum cried. With a sigh, Theron returned to his chart.

When the bell tolled six, Theron put down his instruments, rubbed his eyes, and tiptoed across the stones to the door of his master's secret laboratory. Holding his breath, he rapped on the door.

"Sir, I'm ready to go," he ventured.

When there was no reply, he pressed his ear against the wood and listened. The tinkle of glass, the crackling of a great fire, a puff as if of smoke. The smell of Mana seeped from beneath the door and he inhaled deeply, savoring it. The Grey Lord must be engrossed in a serious experiment. He had been locked inside the vault since the high moon, three nights before.

"Master?" the young apprentice called again.

He thought he heard a rumbling sigh, as if from a dragon or the soul of some harnessed and unhappy demon; and then

the Grey Lord said, "I heard you the first time, Theron. Give me leave to respond, you rash pup."

"Forgive me," Theron murmured, drawing back as the door opened. Fulcrum cawed and flew inside, and Theron seized the chance to glance into the forbidden room. But strain as he might, all he saw was shadow. How Theron longed to work there, learning the powerful wizard's deepest secrets!

"No forgiveness is needed, from you at any rate. It is I who should apologize for my ill temper."

The Grey Lord stepped from the gloom at the far end of the laboratory. Love and awe welled in Theron's heart for the tall figure in the grey wool robes, who had chosen him from all the village lads to serve as his apprentice and promised that in return, he would teach him of the mysteries of the universe, of Magick and Physick, and make of him one day an Arch Master of All the Arts.

"I didn't mean to interrupt you, sir," Theron went on. "It's just that the hour grows late and I—"

"As I said, young one, no need to apologize. I well remember the eagerness of youth. And you have sacrificed much of that vigor in my service. I do not begrudge you your impatience to be off to Viborg." He smiled. "Had I a maid as fair as your Veyla waiting for me, I would be in haste to go as well."

The Grey Lord cocked his head and the dreamy expression Theron knew so well stole over his features. Theron often wondered if his master were lonely, secluded in this dungeon beneath Mt. Anaias, the mountain of lava and crystal. It was rumored to be the resting place of the Power Gem—the orb that thawed the ice from which dwarf and halfling, elf, man, and High Lord alike had risen....

"Well, then," the wizard said, rousing himself from whatever thoughts had led his mind away, "you must be off to collect my henna rope. Put on your cloak."

With a wave of the Grey Lord's hand, a wooden closet covered with ironwork and emeralds swung open and Theron's magic cloak of fluid silver glittered within. It floated across

the room and draped itself around Theron, shining in the dim light. The wizard adjusted it on Theron's shoulders—his mere touch sent crackles of Mana through Theron's body—and he carefully covered Theron's head with the hood.

"A harmonious journey, my young friend." The Grey Lord raised his luminous hand in benediction.

Theron dropped to one knee. "I seek balance in all I do, my lord."

The Grey Lord frowned slightly. "I am your master, Theron, but not your lord. How many times must I tell you this? I would we had never taken that name on. High Lord." His voice was tinged with irony.

"We are no higher than you, though some of us would have you believe otherwise. We slumbered in the ice beside the other races, placed there by the same creator."

"Yes, sir," Theron responded dutifully, though he, like all of Viborg, knew the Grey Lord was not at all like them. It was common knowledge that the High Lords were gods, and the Grey Lord was the most powerful of them. More than once, he personally had saved the people from war and division; from the wizard's own kinsman, Whisdain. And now, rather than retire to the Upper Plane with the other High Lords, or to rule over the world, as he had been asked, he chose to seclude himself in a dungeon of his own making; there to discover the answers to his many questions of origin and purpose, in hopes of creating a world of harmony and balance for those who dwelled upon it.

Together, master and apprentice walked to the sphere of crystals which they used for short journeys from the dungeon, such as the one to Viborg. Theron stood inside it and crossed his wrists beneath the cloak.

"Go in harmony, Theron."

"I seek balance, Grey Lord."

The stone walls of Theron's home began to disappear. Shadows grew beyond the gleam of the crystals, descending on the chests and shelves of books; the table where the Grey Lord and Theron supped, and played chess, and debated

ancient philosophies. On the Grey Lord himself, whose eyes glittered as he watched Theron go.

—Oh, Theron thought, was his master crying?

And then the wizard opened his arms and blurted, "Theron, I've found it!"

Theron gasped. "The Power Gem?"

"Yes! As I always suspected, it lies within the mountain flames."

The crystals blinded Theron; he knew he must close his eyes but he strained to see.

"Master, this is great news!"

The Grey Lord's face swam before him. "Yes. When next we meet, I shall show you a dawn fairer than you can imagine."

While Theron squinted inside the sphere, the case that contained the Firestaff slowly opened. The wizard reached out his hand and drew forth the instrument with a mighty crack.

Theron pounded against the crystals.

"No, master! You mean to extract the Power Gem while I'm gone! You're sending me away so you can do it alone! My lord, attend me! Don't do it! No!"

Theron cried out as the crystals blazed around him. He saw moons and suns and rushing stars; and a pulsing he thought would blind him: golden, no silver, no white, as white-hot as the soul of mortal; as the heart of a High Lord; as the ice that had borne and sheltered their ancestors.

He fell to his knees and covered his eyes. Something surrounded him, a form of Mana more powerful than anything he had ever experienced; it hit him like a blow and he sprawled within the sphere, prostrate.

• • •

Safe within the center of the magic oak that was his destination, Theron awoke with a start and sat up. Slowly he got to his feet, frowning as he did so. A strangeness tugged at his mind. Something alarming had happened in the

laboratory just before his journey. Something to do with his master. He cocked his head. He could remember nothing. He didn't even recall entering the crystal sphere.

Troubled, he stepped from the oak and into a shower of snow-white apple blossoms.

Veyla, his betrothed, giggled as she knelt above him in the cleft of the tree, shaking a limb from her father's apple orchard so that the petals rained down on Theron.

"Harmony, Theron!" she trilled as she dropped the branch and held out her small, soft hands to him. "I've been waiting for you all day!"

Waiting. It was something about waiting. Asking his master to wait for him. To do what? Theron scratched his chin. His mind was blank.

"Theron!" Veyla chided gaily. "Aren't you going to help me down?"

Theron roused himself. Whatever it was would come to him. Perhaps he had dreamed inside the crystal chamber. It would not be the first time.

He smiled up at Veyla and said, "Give me leave to take off my cloak, love. You know its touch would burn you."

"Hurry, then! I'm eager for a kiss!"

Theron removed the cloak and hung it on a branch, then took his beloved in his arms. She was so beautiful; she smelled of apples and roses and her hair was soft as the pelt of a rabbit. Theron couldn't wait until the Grey Lord gave him permission to marry her. When he was an Arch Master—ah, so much depended on that!

"Oh, Veyla," he said, sighing against her hair. "I want to tarry with you, but I'm on an errand for my master."

Veyla knit her brows. "But you told me the Grey Lord bade you stay the night at my father's inn."

"I did?"

"Yes. On the high moon. Don't you remember?"

The odd feeling returned to Theron. He absently stroked Veyla's hair. How could he forget such a thing? What else had he forgotten?

"Truly, Theron, you can ask Father. You are to stay with us. Everything has been arranged. Including a safe place to put...that." Veyla gestured uncertainly toward his cloak. Theron knew she was afraid of it.

"You know I'd like nothing better than to stay with you and your father," Theron said, hiding his confusion, and his reward for his words was another kiss.

"Come now, my love." Veyla grabbed his hand in both of hers and tugged hard. "Father has prepared a feast for you, and the wise woman waits to give you the henna rope for your master. Then we can dream together beside the river."

"How can a man refuse?" he asked, and for the first time realized he was no longer a lad. He was a man of the world, and the Grey Lord's trusted apprentice. He was a mortal of worth. As his dear mother would have said, a *catch* for any girl. And he wanted no one but Veyla.

• • •

They feasted that night, on joints of venison and with his cloak on a hook over his bed, Theron slept the sleep of the well contented, a smile on his face.

He passed the night in wonderful dreams, of his wedding day, of his life with Veyla. The Grey Lord had promised them a cottage on the side of the mountain, with lambs and geese, a waterfall cascading into a pond—a simple thing for him to arrange. Theron and his master would initiate Veyla into their secrets—or most of them; there were some things best left to the ken of High Lords and Arch Masters; and secrets that the Grey Lord alone could possess.

Secrets. Theron frowned in his sleep. There was something about his leavetaking...about secrets...the penetration of mysteries...

And then his dream blurred and raged into a nightmare. He imagined himself in terrible agony, as if he had been torn into two pieces. His own cries echoed in his ears as he strug-

gled against the searing pain that shot through his limbs, his flesh, his heart. His hair burned, his bones throbbed; and he thought that this was what dying was; this was death.

He found himself standing on a hill covered with scorched brush. The trees around him were black skeletons, brown shriveled skins dangling where once the branches dipped with red apples and juicy peaches. The sky was a sea of red, choking with smoke; and his village lay in ruins. Soldiers chased young children through the streets; a sound of wailing filled the air; he heard cracks like thunder and shut his eyes tightly.

When he opened them, he hung above the earth and saw armies riding across the land. War. Famine. Pestilence. Tragedy and misery cut down the people wherever he looked.

Horrified, Theron raced through his nightmare. He flew past the ruined trees and blasted earth; the heavens opened up and frozen rain pelted him; winds struck at him and buffeted him like a feather.

He gathered his cloak around his body, shouting, "No, master! Don't do it while I'm gone! Don't do it, my lord! Attend me!"

He raised his arms above his head — and saw through his own hands. Gasping, he realized his entire body was transparent.

"I'm dreaming," he reminded himself. It was a vivid dream, to be sure, but hadn't the Grey Lord warned him that with increased power, strong visions would sometimes haunt his sleep?

No, said a voice into his ear.

Theron blinked, and the vision was gone. He was standing in the foothills of Mt. Anaias, before the doors to his master's dungeon.

Theron turned around. "Who speaks to me in my nightmare?"

No dream. No nightmare.

"Show yourself!" Theron commanded.

Cannot.

"I demand it!" He raised his hand from his cloak in a gesture of magical power, then drew in his fist and recited a Spell of Seeing.

Faintly, a globe of light appeared before the doors, then ebbed. Theron repeated the magic gesture. The light grew brighter.

It was the sphere of crystal from the Grey Lord's laboratory. And shrouded within it stood a figure of white, its features obscured.

"Theron," the figure rasped.

Theron took three steps backwards. "Master?"

"Theron," the voice said again. The light grew brighter. Theron saw the face of the Grey Lord and ran toward the sphere with outstretched arms.

"Master, Master, tell me what's happening. This must be a vision. I fell asleep a few hours ago, and—"

"No," said Theron's master. He was dressed in white, not his customary grey, and Theron wondered if that was why his face seemed so tight, his lips pursed thin as if in anger. His eyes were steely and flat.

"Listen to me. This is real."

"It's not a dream?" Theron asked, aghast. "Oaths, what's going on?"

"Calm yourself!" the wizard snapped. "We have no time for you to give way to hysteria."

"Yes, sir." Theron looked down at himself. "My lord, what Magick has caused us to be as ghosts?"

His master spoke. "I tried to retrieve the Power Gem. In my foolish enthusiasm, I blurted out my plans to you while you were on your way to collect henna rope from the wise woman of Viborg."

"Now I remember!" Theron cried. "I couldn't before, but—"

"Hush. I made you forget, so that your loyalty wouldn't prompt you to insist on remaining with me. I wasn't sure I would be able to survive the capturing of the Power Gem."

"You discovered the spell?" Theron asked. "You never told me."

"I began it, but I had it wrong. When I applied the spell's energy to the Gem, the universe exploded. I was blinded for a year."

"A *year*?" Theron shouted. "I've been asleep for a year?"

"You haven't been asleep at all. You were torn asunder, the same as I. But because you weren't present at the explosion, you weren't thrown off the material plane, as I was. You see, I exist in a limbo now. I occupy half-spaces. I can't move in this world, as you can. And that's why you must go into the dungeon and stop him."

"Whom?" Theron blinked back tears. Had he thought himself a man only this morning? He was as frightened as a little child.

"Chaos, Theron!" The wizard clenched his fists and raised his face toward the sky. "When the explosion occurred, he split off from me. He is, I am sad to say, my evil side. That wild, uncontrollable part of me that I can scarce acknowledge. We all have one, but mine is now free to wreak his will on mankind. And he seeks to rule over you, to destroy civilization. To send every living creature back to that first age of ice when we were born."

The wizard pointed to the dungeon. "He's taken over the dungeon and seeks the Power Gem. He controls the Firestaff, but he hasn't learned the spell to free the Power Gem, even though the clues lie hidden in my laboratory. I've reordered my thoughts in the years since the accident, and now I alone know the correct spell."

"What do you need me to do, Grey Lord?" Theron asked fiercely.

The figure visibly jerked. "First of all, you must no longer think of me as the Grey Lord. I have relinquished that name. I am to be called Librasulus." Which, Theron knew, translated from the ancient language of High Magick as "Restorer of Order."

"Yes, Lord Librasulus," Theron said, lowering his head in a gesture of fealty. "I pledge you my service."

"Excellent. I count on that service, Theron. You must be

my arms and legs. My eyes and mind. Until I possess the Firestaff, I cannot enter the dungeon. Since the Great Catastrophe, I can only appear on this plane, in this place outside it, just as he must remain within it. We are here, he and I, and yet we are not. You must bring the Firestaff to this place."

Theron licked his lips. "But how can I get into the dungeon? I have no substance either. Do I not occupy half-spaces?"

Lord Librasulus nodded. "That's logical, Theron. I taught you well. But there are actions you can take that I cannot. Actions you must take, if I am to stop Lord Chaos. That's what he calls himself. He is master of my dungeon now. You must give it back to me."

"The dungeon?" Theron squinted at the wizard as the sphere began to jitter.

"The Firestaff! Don't you see? With it, I have the power to enter the dungeon and retrieve the Power Gem. Then I will banish Chaos and the world will know a new age of order!"

"But—"

"I can stay no longer. You must hear me now. In the years since the Catastrophe, I've sent mortal champions into the dungeon, in the hopes that they could retrieve the Firestaff. Unfortunately," Lord Librasulus said, "they perished in the attempt."

"All of them?"

"But a few hundred. A small sacrifice, when one counts the fate of millions against it. They weren't disciplined enough. They couldn't focus themselves. They fought with each other, stopped to gather treasures. So they died."

Theron's heart chilled. How bloodlessly his master spoke of these things. But how tired he seemed, how tormented he must be. Perhaps he had cut off his emotion in order to survive an unendurable weight of guilt.

Theron nodded and said, "So they died, sir."

"Lord Chaos hung twenty-four of them in a place he calls the Hall of Champions." The great High Lord scowled. "It's his trophy room. He has imprisoned them there, in magic

mirrors. They are frozen, suspended, dead and yet not dead. He placed them there as warnings for those who would undertake my cause."

Lord Librasulus paced back and forth within the sphere. "You, with your advanced knowledge of the arts, can enter the Hall and awaken them. I have sufficient power to aid you in this, but only for four souls. You may select as many as four, but no more. They will not see you, but your influence and knowledge shall guide them through the dungeon and to the Firestaff."

"And I must decide which of them is to possess a new lifetime?" Theron asked softly. "A heavy burden."

"You can also use their life energies to create champions more to your liking," Lord Librasulus said offhandedly.

"What?" Theron's eyes widened.

"Yes. I can empower you to do that. Perhaps you shall find that another lad with your own abilities better suits the task at hand. Or perhaps you need clever helpers more than strong ones. You can fashion what you will."

"That sounds almost...blasphemous, my lord."

The wizard ignored him. "You shall lead your champions as I am now leading you, as a spirit without form or substance. It is they who must move and act in the world. They, who still belong to it. Go quickly, Theron, into the dungeon and rouse the world's saviours. Choose wisely, for upon them hangs destiny."

"But how shall I choose?" Theron asked, bewildered. "What dangers do they face?"

"Lord Chaos has perverted my experiments. He has created deadly puzzles they must solve—twisting my love of logic, spitting in my face. He's created hideous monsters. I've been told by those who've escaped that some of those monsters once were mortals, whom he captured and transformed. It is hell that I send you to, Theron. But it is necessary."

The sphere shattered into thousands of pieces. Theron covered his face and shouted, "How am I to choose? What am I to do?"

As the crystals of the sphere plummeted to the earth, the wizard's voice echoed against the wind. *Go into the dungeon and look at the Champions in their vaults.*

Look into their souls and see what they were made of.

Look.

* * *

Theron looked. He sent his mind past the dungeon doors, searching and seeking down the tunnels and shafts to the Hall of Champions. It was dark; and an aura of gloom rolled through it, of violence and despair.

Of death.

On the walls of the wretched catacomb he saw mirrors, and in them the frozen champions. Men, women, dwarves, elves, and creatures he had never seen before—a lizard-man, a dog-thing. Their glazed eyes stared at him as if in entreaty—

Help us, free us.

Theron stopped before the face of an Elven woman. She was as lovely as Veyla, with light brown hair and a Champion's strong features, a gown of white falling off her shoulders. Moved, he reached out his hand to touch her through the mirror.

And then a scream of anguish pierced his temples.

* * *

He was tumbling into a pit. Stones and torches and the writhing forms of four people crashed past him and everything slammed into a huge pile. A wooden beam toppled across the back of an old man with a white beard. He cried out, then was still. The elf landed on top of a large, burly youth dressed in a loincloth; another man braced himself for impact by crouching into a ball and was covered with rocks and stones.

"Syra!" the young man shouted. A broadsword cuffed his

temple and he sprawled forward.

Theron braced himself for impact but he simply hovered above the scene, a hapless onlooker. A sick feeling grabbed at his stomach when he realized he was watching a scene from the past and that these four were now imprisoned in the mirror-crypts. He had a premonition that he was to witness their deaths and wished with all his heart that someone else had been cursed with this terrible mission.

The bearded man was dressed in the robes of a prophet. The muscular youth was obviously a Barbarian. The other man was, perhaps, a thief—some of the pouches on his leather belt had burst, and a handful of gems and trinkets spilled across the dirt and stone.

And the beautiful elf he recognized from the Hall of Champions, what of her? An oak staff lay near outstretched arm, bearing the crest of those who tended the oak grove where his magic tree grew—or once had grown, before the ravaging of the earth.

After a time, the old man stirred beneath the wooden beam. "Syra," he said, gasping.

Theron swallowed hard when she didn't reply. Then she moaned and opened her eyes.

"Nabi!" She scrambled over to him and tried to pull the beam off his back. Her hands were torn and bleeding. "Halk! Alex! Help me!"

The man called Nabi inhaled sharply. "The map. I dropped it when we fell. I'm sorry, child. I fear it is lost."

"Great. Just great," the Barbarian youth muttered, picking rocks off himself as he sat up. "No map. Wasn't it enough that you opened the pit?"

"Can you sit up, Nabi?" Syra asked. She began to cry when the old man shook his head.

The Barbarian rolled his eyes. "It grows even better. We have a wounded leader, a hysterical wench, and Alex Ander is out cold." He nudged the unconscious man. "Still alive, though."

"Oh," Syra said softly. "Is he badly hurt?" She seemed

torn between tending Nabi and going to Alex Ander.

"How should I know?" Halk snapped. "I'm no priest." He gestured toward the prophet, draped over Syra's lap. "He's done for, eh?"

"Halk, be quiet," Syra said through clenched teeth. "You have the sensitivity of a troll!"

Halk grunted and slapped Alex's cheeks. "Wake up. No goldbricking allowed! We've got to get out of here."

"I'll have to make up some more healing potions," Syra told Nabi. "I'm sorry; I should have had some ready." She reached into his pouch and pulled out an empty flask.

"That's right," Halk called out as he raised Alex's lids and studied his eyes. "If you'd been practicing your healing spells, maybe you could've improved the old man's vision."

"A pity we need you." Syra closed her hand around a dagger at her waist. "I've had almost all I can take of you, Barbarian."

The Barbarian drew himself up. "Listen, 'child of nature,' I've done *my* part. *I've* practiced *my* skills. I'm the only journeyman *anything* in this band."

Nabi flashed Syra a mournful smile. "I'm sorry I was so careless. Halk is right; it was I who opened up the pit."

"You didn't see the trigger. It was dark," she replied, brushing his hair away from his forehead. "I'm going to check on Alex. Lie still."

She rose unsteadily and made her way to Alex's side. She lost her footing in the rocks and slid partway down the pile, catching herself by grabbing onto an oaken plank.

"Strong work," Halk growled.

Syra glared at him. "We wouldn't be in this predicament if *you* hadn't insisted on going after that chest! We wasted our time getting to that thing."

"I need armour," Halk said defensively. "There could have been food inside it, too."

"I guess everyone's all right," Alex Ander drawled as he raised himself on his elbows and grinned at Syra. "You two are bickering as usual."

Wordlessly Syra shook her head. A glance passed between her and the handsome man and Theron realized they were in love, and his heart moved for them.

"Nabi," she whispered.

"Oh, no." Alex closed his eyes tightly and groped for her hand. They sat silently for a moment, comforting each other.

"Start a new map," Nabi said with great effort. "It's vital to your survival. And Halk's right. You must be careful to explore the dungeon, even the dead ends. You never know what you might find."

"Yes." Alex opened his eyes and nodded. "We've found some good things."

"Bah! Like crowns and necklaces?" Halk threw more stones down the side of the hill of debris. "If you didn't carry all that junk around, thief, you wouldn't be too tired to fight! You were no help at all with the trolin."

"You shouldn't have leaned against the wall," Alex retorted. "You let it out. Nabi told us there are switches and triggers everywhere."

Halk crossed his arms. "There was nothing on that cursed wall! A fountain—"

"Just because you didn't see it—"

"Well, I saw the pit." Halk wiped his muddy hands on his loincloth and took a drink from the gourd on his belt. "The outline was plain as day. And speaking of day, we have somebody's god to thank for that torch over there. This place would be dark as a moonless night without it. Ours are all out."

Syra left Alex and returned to Nabi. With great love and gentleness she touched his forehead. "We'll get out Nabi. Don't—"

"All this talking bores me. We should start searching for a way out." Halk got to his feet and started digging through the rubble. "Loki's bolts, where's my sword?"

The atmosphere in the corridor changed. Theron felt it as surely as someone pressed a block of ice to the back of his neck. Dread flooded through him like a frigid river. He wanted to warn them, tell them to flee, but he was powerless.

He could only watch the past unfold.

"Here it is!" Halk announced, lifting the same broadsword over his head that had knocked out Alex Ander. "Now, if only I had some chain mail or a helmet, I'd be invincible!"

"Just a little more difficult to kill," Syra said.

Suddenly a violent tremor assaulted the walls of the chamber. More stones fell from the ceiling and Syra hunched over Nabi to protect him as they thundered down.

Two large doors appeared at the end of the passage. They cracked open and the space between them blazed with searing white light.

"By my troth," Nabi whispered. "I see him! It is the dark lord we were warned about! You must run!"

The rumbling became a roar. Rhythmic thunder sent tremors through the stones—the footsteps of doom, heading for them.

"Escape!" Nabi croaked.

"Nabi's right," Alex said. "We'll need the torch." He scrambled through the wreckage to the wall and tried to pull the torch out of the sconce.

"It's stuck!"

"I'm not running! I'll stay and fight!" Halk bellowed, racing down the corridor toward the doors. He leaped over a grate and positioned himself in front of the doors. "I've fought Oitu's and living skeletons and a thousand things I've never seen before and by the bones of Whisdain, I'm not through fighting yet!"

"Get away! Flee!" Nabi's chest heaved. "I see him coming, with his black cape and his horns! Go!"

Syra licked her lips. Theron sagged as he saw her face harden with resolve. He knew she would stay to protect the old man.

"Perhaps I can deflect him," she said. "I am, after all, an apprentice wizard." Squaring her shoulders, she picked up her staff and joined the others near the door. She held the staff in the direction of the door. Then her dress caught on the end of a candelabra buried among the rocks.

"Mother Mentra, be my light," Syra said. Quickly she lit the candles in the flames of the torch, which Alex still fought to pull out of its holder.

Behind her, Nabi screamed. She whirled around.

He and the huge pile of stone were gone. In his place gleamed a pile of skulls, the remains of his intricate map wedged among them.

"He mocks us!" Syra said. She whirled back around and faced the door. "Come then, monster! We'll destroy you!"

"No, no! You can't!" Theron yelled, though no one could hear him. Even if they could have, it was too late. Light filled his eyes—

• • •

And so it went as Theron searched the souls of the imprisoned champions, forced to watch the deaths of four-and-twenty valiant champions.

Then at last, the visions dissolved, and Theron stood alone at the entrance to his master's dungeon.

2. GOAL OF THE GAME

Now your quest begins. You must choose your champions, take up the challenge to recover the Firestaff, and venture deep into the forbidding dungeon. If your guidance is true, you may restore balance to a ravaged world. If you fail, then all will surely fall to Chaos.

You've been told to find the Firestaff and bring it to Lord Librasulus. Librasulus stands for all that is order. Yet your master the Greylord has cautioned you always to "seek balance in all things." Does Librasulus represent balance? Consider all this well on your quest. As the great sorcerer Greylord has true wisdom, he is blessed with both chaos and order.

In any case, the only way to restore order and bring peace to the worlds is to stop the evil sorcerer's chaos by using the power of the Firestaff.

3. STARTING THE GAME

Dungeon Master requires a party of one to four champions The game can't start until you have chosen a party Here's how to choose a party

1 Start the game. Insert the GAME PAK into the Super Nintendo console and turn on the power The title screen will come on and the opening animation will start. Press the "START" button to begin the game

2 The entrance to the dungeon should appear and the doors will draw back

3. When the movement control panel appears in the lower right corner of your screen, you can enter the dungeon using the control pad as described below in "Using the Controller" Go to the Hall of Champions where the spirits of 24 champions are imprisoned in mirrors. You can select up to four of these and bring them back to form your dungeon party

4. Examine each champion carefully Stand directly in front of a champion's mirror and press the "B" button while the pointer is on his portrait. You will see the champion's inventory screen which shows his possessions and the physical condition of the champion. The information described under Champion's Abilities and Champion's Skill Levels can also be viewed.

5.Selecting the champion. If the champion is one you would like to include in your party you can choose to either "reincarnate" or "resurrect" them. Otherwise move the pointer to "Cancel" and press the "B" button.

Resurrection vs. Reincarnation

If you choose to resurrect a champion he or she will return to life exactly as they were before death Resurrected champions remember all of the skills and abilities of their previous life If you choose to reincarnate a champion they will lose all past memories and skills and take on a new identity. Their previous skills however are converted to greater physical attributes which gives them much greater potential once you start developing their skills

If you choose to reincarnate a champion, a window appears that you can use to name your new champion. Select up to eight letters with the "B" button to form a new name for the champion When you are finished, select the ENT symbol in the lower right corner of the window.

After choosing one to four champions for your party you are ready to go deeper in the dungeon

Champion's Abilities

Each champion's health stamina and mana (magical energy) are constantly monitored The individual values of these are shown by a bar graph next to the champion's portrait above the dungeon view

Health	[illegible]
Stamina	[illegible]
Mana	[illegible]

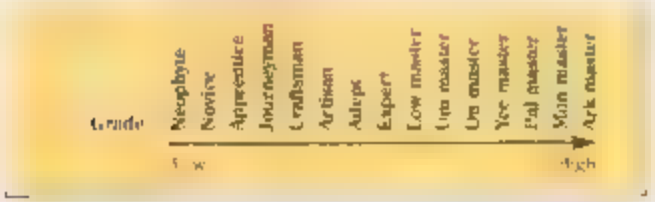
Each champion has various other abilities which can be viewed in the Status screen The Status Screen is viewed by placing the pointer over the eye and pressing the "B" in the inventory screen (see reference to "eye" in the section below on Inventory Screen) These abilities improve during various experiences and encounters in the game

Strength:	Governs the champions ability to attack and carry heavy loads.
Dexterity:	Decides how well a champion handles weapons and how well he avoids attack. Different champions have more or less dexterity.
Wisdom:	Regulates how fast a champion learns spells and how fast his or her mana recovers after being used.
Vitality:	Is a measure of how fast a champion will heal from a wound and how difficult they are to injure.
Anti-Magic:	Is a champion's resistance to attacks by magic.
Anti-fire:	Is a champion's resistance to fire damage.

Champion's Skill Levels

While viewing the Status Screen, you can place the pointer over the box marked LEVEL and press "B" to view the Level Screen. Each champion is either a Fighter, Ninja, Healer or Wizard, though many champions possess considerable skills in several of the categories and it is possible to be accomplished in all categories. A champion's level of proficiency in any given skill area can be examined in the "LEVEL" screen. The level of proficiency shown by the bar graphs can be interpreted below.

Grading the 15 Levels



4. USING THE CONTROLLER

Carefully study all of the functions of the controller in Dungeon Master. Being able to quickly use the controller can save your party in battle and make maneuvering in the dungeon much easier.

The pointer appears in the shape of a hand while it is in the dungeon window. It appears as an arrowhead pointer while outside the dungeon window and activates the menus for magic, battle and party position. The pointer represents the party leader's hand. Whenever something is picked up, thrown or activated, it is the party leader taking that action. The party leader is distinguished by a yellow highlighting of their name. You can change the party leader by placing the pointer above the two hand boxes for any champion and pressing the "B" button.

CONTROL PAD: Moves the pointer at normal speed around the screen. By depressing the "R" button, the pointer movement slows for more precise placement.

"R" button: Executes most actions; pushes buttons, pulls levers, picks up objects, releases thrown objects, etc.

"A" button: Makes the screen revert from any optional view back to the dungeon view.

"X" button: Switches between the dungeon view and the inventory views. Once in inventory view for a champion, you can switch to any other champion by using the "R" or "L" buttons.

"START" button: Also used to pause the game and save a game in progress.

"X" button: Switches the control pad from moving the pointer to moving the party in the dungeon. It also makes the "R" and "L" buttons on top of the controller become the "R" and "L" turn controls.

"SELECT" button: Reverses the effect of the "X" or "Shift" button so the joypad normally moves the party in the dungeon and you have to use the "X" key to get pointer control again.

Movement Menu Box On Screen

Movement in the dungeon is accomplished in one of two ways. First, you can drag the pointer over the movement menu box (shown below) then select the move you want to make and release it by pressing the "B" button. The second and preferred method is to press and hold the "X" button, then use the buttons on the control pad that are convenient to the movement menu arrows. See the illustration below

8. EXPLANATION OF SCREEN VIEWS

The two main screen views in Dungeon Master are
A. The dungeon view and
B. The champion inventory view
The dungeon view is the 3-D view of the dungeon shown below. ALL GAME ACTION HAPPENS IN THIS VIEW

Dungeon View

1. Inside the dungeon
2. Ready hand
3. Action hand
4. Defense display
5. Physical-strength scale (from the left, health, stamina, mana)
6. Name of the champion
7. Spell menu
8. Attack menu
9. Pointer
10. Move menu
11. Party arrangement

Inventory View

The inventory view shows you many details about each of your champions. It is also the area where you store things that you are taking with you in the dungeon. You can switch from dungeon view to inventory view by using the "Y" button. You can then cycle through the various champion's inventory screens by pressing the "R" or "L" button while in any champion's inventory view

1. Ready hand
2. Neck
3. Portrait of the selected champion
4. Eye
5. Head
6. Mouth
7. Chest
8. Total weight of the belongings
9. Weight limit
10. Backpack
11. Food meter
12. Sleep icon
13. Action hand
14. Quiver
15. Waist
16. Legs
17. Champion abilities
18. Pouch

❶ Ready hand

The non-action hand holds non-combat items and supplies ammunition for range weapons to the action hand

❷ Action hand

The hand represented by the combat vests. This hand must hold the weapon the champion is to use

❸ Neck, ❹ Head, ❺ Chest, ❻ Waist, and ❼ Legs

These body areas can be covered with protective gear. When injured the injury display is seen over the affected body area.

❽ Eye

To examine an object, take the object and place it over the eye using the pointer. Then press the "B" button. The weight and other notable points are displayed. When the "B" button is pressed while the hand is empty but held above the eye, the screen showing the champion's degrees of ability and skill levels is displayed

❾ Mouth

When an edible object is placed over the mouth (controlled using the pointer), you can eat the object

❿ Total weight of belongings and ⓫ Weight limit

When the total weight of belongings approaches the weight limit, the color of the weights changes from yellow to red. The party will slow under a heavy load and can only move as fast as the slowest member

⓬ Backpack

This backpack can hold up to 17 objects regardless of their sizes

⓭ Food scale

When a person becomes hungry or thirsty, the scale's color changes from yellow to red; if no food or water is taken, the person will eventually die

⓮ Sleep icon

Move the pointer to this icon and press the "B" button to make the party fall asleep. Sleep restores health, stamina, and mana. To wake the party up, press the "A" button. They wake up automatically and the screen changes to the dungeon view if the party is attacked during sleep.

⓯ Quiver

[illegible] container to keep a short supply of three range weapons such as arrows. The weapons kept here will automatically be supplied to the ready hand during combat, if it is empty

⓰ Physical characteristics

This shows the physical strength in more detail than the scale at the top of the screen. On the left of the slash sign ("/") is the current value, and on the right is the maximum value. The maximum value can increase with experience.

⓱ Pouch

This is convenient for storing several small items.

6. CONTROLLING YOUR CHAMPIONS

Individual Champion Data

❶ Name

A champion's name (leader's name is always in yellow).

❷ Action hand

The hand on the right is called the action hand. It holds weapons and other items used in combat. Each combat item has unique capabilities. Be sure to familiarize yourself with them.

❸ Ready hand

The hand on the left is called the ready hand. Among other items, the hand is used to hold ammunition for range weapons like arrows, darts, throwing stars, and stones used with a sling. An arch or crossbow cannot be used unless an arrow is held in the ready hand. In this way, each time an arrow is launched, new ammunition is automatically supplied from the quiver.

❹ Physical strength scale

The three bar graphs represent the champion's level of health, stamina, and mana, respectively from the left. When a champion is injured, his health scale decreases. When it reaches zero, he dies. When his stamina reaches the half way mark or lower a smaller load can be carried. When magic is used, the mana graph decreases.

Note: The color of the scale varies with the champion; in other words, it is his personal color. Champions are identified by their color in the combat and Magic menus.

❺ Protective indicator

Using a magic spell or special potion, your champions can be protected from certain attacks. An indicator color shows if a champion is currently protected. The protection status is also displayed as icons at the lower left of the individual's data.

Red (Anti-fire): Fire shield (protects from fire and heat from fireballs and similar objects)

Blue (Anti-attack): Attack shield (protects from attack by monsters)

Purple (Anti-spell):
Spell shield (protects from spells)

The Leader's Role

Leader is an arbitrary designation. You can change who the leader is at any time by moving the pointer over the desired champion's name and pressing the "B" button. The current leader is identified by their name highlighted in yellow.

The main dungeon view is always that of the leader. Through you the leader picks up all objects and either uses them or places them in a different location by moving the pointer over the desired location and pressing the "B" button again. The leader can also throw any object by moving the pointer into the upper third of the dungeon view and pressing the "B" button.

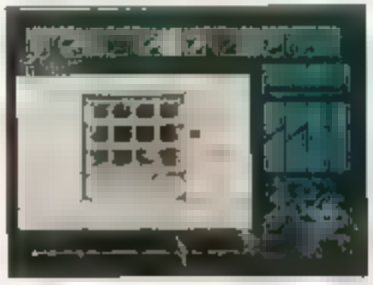
Some of the actions the leader's hand can perform are: picking up objects, using objects in the dungeon, placing objects in another champion's hands or pack, throwing objects, operating special tools like keys, drawing water with a flask or water bag from a fountain, pressing buttons and pulling levers.

Combat

To engage in battle with a creature, you must use the attack menu. The attack menu is activated by placing the pointer over one of the champion's icon panels. Each of the four icons represents what a champion is holding in his "Action" hand. Once the pointer is over the champion's icon panel, you access the attack menu by pressing the "B" button. Pressing the "B" button reveals different options for attack using the weapon in that champion's hand. To execute one of the attack options you place the pointer in the selected box and press the "B" button again. To cancel the attack without taking any action, you simply press the "A" button.

Casting Spells

One of the most important characteristics of a champion in Dungeon Master is the ability to use magic. Most magic is performed by casting spells. Casting spells is done by combining magic runes or symbols into a complete spell. Casting a spell consumes "mana" or magical energy. Any member of the party can learn to cast spells. It will take more or less practice to do this effectively depending on how much mana the champion has. With practice a champion can learn to cast a spell and gradually increase the power of the spell.



1. Determine who in the party should cast the spell by placing the pointer over the small colored bar above the spell menu panel. The color of this bar corresponds to the color of the bar graphs next to the four portraits at the top of the screen. To cycle through all of the champion's colors, keep pressing the "B" button.

2. Select one of the first six symbols that appear using the "B" button. These represent the power level of the spell you will cast. The selected power level symbol will appear in the white window immediately below the menu and the six symbols will be replaced by six others. The second six symbols represent the "elemental" factor in the spell. After selecting one it appears below the menu and six new symbols appear. The third set of six symbols represent the form that the spell will take. After selecting the form of the spell, the symbols are again replaced by the last set of six which represent the class alignment of the spell.

- Casting the spell is done by placing the pointer in the box where your spell has been building below the menu and pressing the "B" button.

- During the spell casting process you can erase or recant any one or more of the symbols by pressing the "A" button. The symbol will be erased but the mana used will not be returned to the champion.

You will find that many spells have no effect unless cast by a champion with sufficient mana to cast them. Try a different party member or keep practising with the spell until that champion is more proficient. Some spells require an additional device in the form of a flask to contain a potion or bomb.

Party Arrangement

At the center of the movement control panel near the lower right corner of the screen is the party arrangement. This diagram shows the relative position of each champion to every other champion as they progress through the dungeon. You can change a champion's position by placing the pointer over the champion's icon and pressing the "B" button. Placing that champion over another and pressing the "B" button again will cause those two champions to trade places. Proper positioning of the champions is a key and because champions with swords and knives are ineffective from the rear ranks. Placing champions that are fatigued or injured from battle in the rear ranks gives them a chance to recuperate

7. SAVING/LOADING

Saving a Game in Progress:

Press the "START" button during a game and the Game Save screen appears. You have a choice of "Return Game" which takes you right back to where you were, or "Save Menu" which brings up the next screen. The next screen gives you a choice of "Cancel" which takes you back to the last screen or "Data Save" which begins the save sequence. The message "Saving Now" appears briefly on the screen then the message changes to "Save End". After a short time another screen appears giving you a choice of "Return Game" which takes you back to where you left off in the game or "Exit Game"

Loading a Saved Game

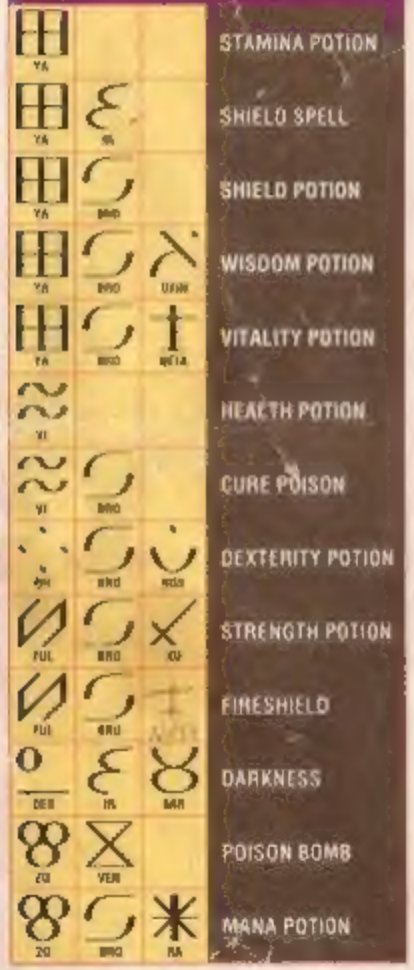
To load a game that you have in progress and have saved previously first start the game as you normally would. At the Dungeon Master sign on screen press the "down arrow" on the **CONTROL PAD** once to highlight the words "Load Game" then press the "Start" button or "B" button. The message "Loading" will appear on screen briefly and your game will resume from its last saved point.

	HEALTH	STAMINA	MANA	LOAD	FIGHTER	NINJA	PRIEST	WIZARD	STRENGTH	DEXTERITY	WISDOM	VITALITY	ANTI-MAGIC	ANTI-FIRE	
ALEX Ander	50	57	13	46		3			44	55	45	40	35	40	Sling Suede Boots Leather Pants and Jerkin
AZIZ Johan	61	77	7	48	2	3			47	48	42	45	30	35	2 Daggers Hide Shield Halter Barbarian Hide
BORIS Wizard of Baldor	35	36	28	38		2			35	45	55	40	45	40	Rabbit's Foot Tunic Leather Pants and Boots
CHANI Sayyandin Sihaya	47	67	17	40	2				37	47	57	37	47	37	Moonstone Silk Shirt Gunna Sandals
DAROOU	100	65	6	50	3				50	30	35	45	30	45	none
ELIJA Lion of Yaitopya	60	58	22	44	2		3		42	40	42	36	53	40	Magic Box Robe Sandals
GANDO Thurfoot	39	63	26	42		3			39	45	47	33	48	33	2 Poison Darts Blue Pants Leather Jerkin and Boots
GOTHMOG	60	55	18	42					40	43	48	34	50	59	Cloak of Night
HALK The Barbarian	90	75	0	54	4				55	43	30	46	38	48	Club Berzerker Helm Barbarian Hide Sandals
HAWK The Fearless	70	85	10	46	2		3		45	35	38	55	35	35	2 Arrows Suede Boots Leather Jerkin and Pants
HISSSA Lizar of Makan	80	61	5	57	3	2			58	48	35	35	43	55	none
IAIDO Ruyito Chiburi	48	65	11	45	3		2		43	55	40	35	45	50	Samurai Sword Gi Gi Trowsers

	HEALTH	STAMINA	MANA	LOAD	FIGHTER	NINJA	PRIEST	WIZARD	STRENGTH	DEXTERITY	WISDOM	VITALITY	ANTI MAGIC	ANTI FIRE	
LEIF The Valiant	75	70	7	47	3		2		46	40	39	50	45	45	Leather Jerkin Leather Pants and Boots
LEYLA Shadowsaek	48	60	3	42		4			40	53	45	47	45	35	Rope Silk Shirt Leather Pants and Boots
LINFLAS	65	50	12	49	3			2	45	45	47	35	50	35	Bow Elven Doublet Elven Huke Elven Boots
MOPHUS The Healer	55	55	19	44			4		42	35	40	48	40	45	Bread Cheese Apple Robe Sandals
NABI The Prophet	55	65	13	43			3	1	41	36	45	45	55	55	Staff Tunic Blue Pants Sandals
SONJA She Demon	65	70	2	54	4				54	45	39	49	40	40	Sword Choker Halter Gunna Sandals
STAMM Bladecaster	75	80	0	52	4				52	43	35	50	35	55	Axe Leather Pants Tunic Suede Boots
SYRA Child of Nature	53	72	15	41			2	1	38	35	43	45	42	40	Apple Tabard Elven Doublet
TIGGY Tamai	25	45	36	34		2		1	30	45	50	35	59	40	Wand Kirtle Gunna Sandals
WU TSE Son of Heaven	45	47	20	41		2	3		38	35	53	45	47	40	3 Throwing Stars Tabard Silk Shirt Sandals
WUUF The Bika	40	50	30	37		3	2		33	57	45	40	35	40	Flask Leather Jerkin
ZED Duke of Barnville	60	60	10	42	2	2	2	2	40	40	40	50	40	40	Torch Mail Aketon Blue Pants Hosen

9. MAGICK

SPELLS



WIZARD SPELLS

POWER SYMBOLS (increasing order)

10. GAME HINTS

Dungeon Master is a real-time, role-playing game. Even when you do not do anything, time passes. The world around you will not wait for you. Here are some tips to remember while playing.

*Be prepared. Keep a weapon in the action hand. If you use a weapon that requires ammunition, place the ammunition in the quiver. When you shoot an arrow, a new arrow will be placed in ready hand automatically.

*Practice, practice, practice. Fighting and magic both require practice. Your abilities will improve the more often you use your skills.

*Plan an escape route. The enemy will attack from any direction, front, side or back. Plan an escape so the party can temporarily rest to recharge their strengths. If you can see that you can't win a battle, try running away.

*Watch carefully. A very valuable item may be on the ground or hidden under something. Also levers on the walls and switches hidden in the walls may be missed if you aren't observant. Noises will also be very important, for example the clicking sound when you place your foot on a pressure plate or the sound of a door opening. Learn to distinguish these sounds quickly and accurately.

*Make a map. An accurate dungeon map will be very useful. Walking around the same place several times can be avoided if you have a map. Grid paper is excellent for map making. Allow about 30 squares in each direction on your page for each level.

*Saving. Save often. An unexpected attack that wipes out your party can cost you lots of progress if you haven't saved [illegible] Don't leave saving just for when you want to stop

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Director:	Hisaki Yokoi
Assistant Director:	Kazuya Tominaga
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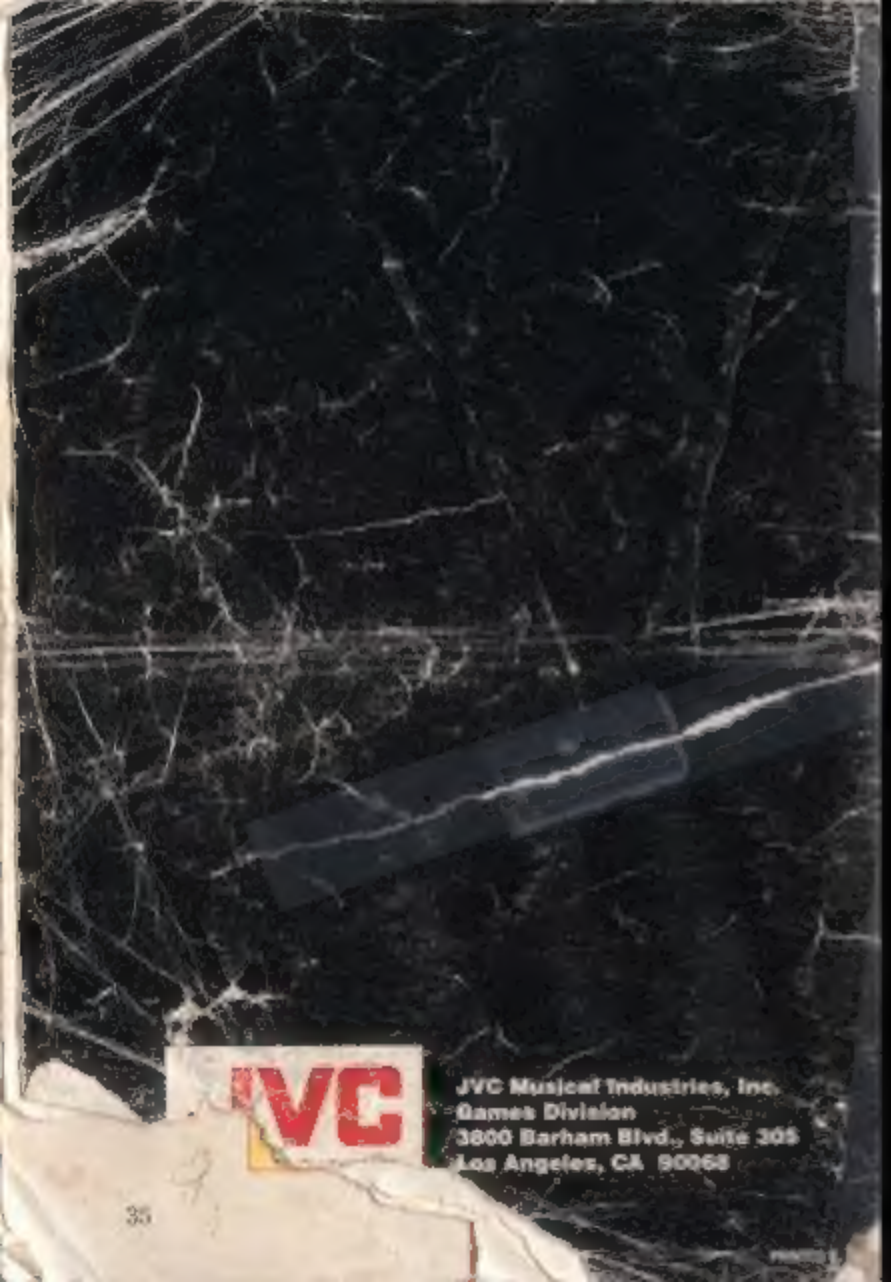
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